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Senate Agrees, Boating Hit-and-Run a Felony *Punishment now same as vehicular hit-and-run*

LANSING – Members of the Michigan State Senate unanimously approved legislation Wednesday that would impose stricter sentencing guidelines for boaters involved in hit-and-run accidents.

Co-sponsored by Sen. Michael Bishop (R-Rochester), Senate Bills 658 and 659 change the penalties for the operator of a boat involved in a hit-and-run accident resulting in death or serious injury from a misdemeanor to a felony. This change makes the penalty for this crime the same as for those causing a hit-and-run accident in an automobile.

“Leaving the scene of an accident is serious crime whether it’s on land or on a lake,” Bishop said. “State law shouldn’t go so easy on people who commit the crime on water. Now that is being changed.”

Under existing law, the driver of a boat involved in such an accident is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum sentence of 90 days. Under the proposed changes, someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing death would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines. Someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing serious impairment would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.

Senate Bills 658 and 659 now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.